Erica Walker

Professor Richmond

Voices of Diversity 2110

25 March 2018

*BFE* Critical Review

Because I was anticipating seeing *BFE* performed when I read it, I was intrigued to see how the scenes would play out on stage as opposed to imagining them in my head. The play itself is mostly straight forward, however, there is much room for interpretation as the stage directions given are limited and there is little instruction given at all aside from the basics for characters and settings. The production of this play was very organized and entertaining despite that. The setting was made clear, costumes for characters fit well, the actor's performances were exceptional, and the director's management was sufficient in making the show successful.

Despite there being much of an actual setting on stage, the idea of one was presented very well through the props and the characters' actions. Simplicity seemed to be prevalent for the scenes and props which I believe allowed for more focus on the plot of the story and how the characters presented it. The organization of the stage was creative with the easily accessible and moveable boxes, chairs, stool, and table. One prominent prop, the television in Panny's home was correct for the period in which the play is meant to be set, the late nineties. Throughout the play, the characters and props were visible all over the stage in relation to the architecture of the seats in the theatre and personally, I was able to see everything clearly and understand any changes even to the very side of the stage where I was sitting. Along with this, all of the props were intricately placed for the actors to reach them in a timely manner and to be used when necessary. The scene where Isabel and Jack (the pizza delivery boy) had a "picnic" was a brilliant example that I noticed the blanket was placed for them to reach it quickly almost as if it were in an actual living room sitting on a couch or chair. A last point that I would like to make about the setting is that it went very well in relation to the play. The way that Panny presents the world around her is very dull and boring, so having the minimal for the props and "background items" added to the true presentation of this production.

The costumes in this play fit very well with the style of small-town characters in the late nineties. For the ages and personalities of the characters, each actor was appropriately dressed. Panny's hair and style was exactly as I imagined while reading the play, and although I had no specific vision of what Hugo looked like, his clothes and the actor presenting him was perfect. I did have an issue with Isabel's robe. Because she had a full face of makeup and her hair done, I feel as though she should have been dressed up to go along with this. She does not leave the house, but her being dressed up would have fit her character more in the sense that she seems to attempt to always be "beautiful." Another interesting costume choice was that of the general/ pizza delivery boy. Having the same actor play both of these characters made for a very impressive costume change and symbolically, a twist for Isabel. Each character's outfit went well with the personality attributed to them and I was quite impressed with the accuracy.

Each character seemed to have very strong personalities like expected in the play except for Panny, although I think her shyness and slight awkward acting fit the character. She is a fourteen-year-old who is still unsure of the world and how things work because of the lack of influence in her life. The actress playing as Panny did a good job portraying the hesitance. The actor playing Lefty did a wonderful job. I was confused if his personality was authentic because that is how the actor is off stage or if he is just that good of an actor. The introvert and slightly nerdy personality of Lefty was displayed very well throughout the play. A nice example of his introvertedness was when he got very close and comfortable with Evvie and spoke of moving in very excitedly with her. His entire dynamic changed, and as the conversation went on, his voice got higher and louder like it should at the perfect rate. Isabel's actress did a wonderful job of displaying the loud and pushy personality that one imagines Isabel to have. A notable moment of her displaying this well was when she got upset that Jack called her the wrong name and she yelled after him the correct name. A character that really stood out was Hae-Yoon. The actress displaying this character did a wonderful job of showing her energy and excitement about writing to Panny. There were moments that made her hard to understand because of the thick accent that she used but it made her character more realistic. All in all, the actors and actresses did a very good job working in synchrony and keeping the show entertaining with their own individual attributes which led to a very clear storyline. Those chosen for this play were very good choices on the director's part.

Not only were the actors and actresses chosen right for the parts because they portrayed the characters well, they were each accurate in the descriptions given for casting which is a task that can be tedious for the director. With Asian-Americans being a minority, I imagine in theatre as well, I was impressed that the director was able to accurately cast. Even the actress playing Isabel was fairly accurate in that she still slightly looked of Asian descent (from the audience, anyways) but definitely looked like she might have had surgery to modify her look. The storyline was very clear, though it was hard to distinguish some scenes from others because there was no indication other than the cast moving around. One issue that seemed apparent was the audience's laughter interrupting the casts conversations which cannot always be stopped but I think in some cases throughout this play it was possible for a pause. Moments that I noticed would still have gone alright with a pause were some of Hae-Yoon's comedic relief, when Lefty and Evvie had the realization that they would not work out, and when The Man told disgustedly told Panny that she could keep the handkerchief. The performance moved very smoothly with no complications and the rhythm of the acting was as if the story was occurring and not just being acted out on a stage. The director was successful in creating a compelling performance.

Seeing *BFE* at the Seney-Stovall Chapel was a delight that I enjoyed very much. The director did a wonderful job at organizing this performance despite a nonexistent budget and lack of instruction given to honor the playwright. Though I was prepared for the information throughout the show, seeing it and being able to experience what the actors and actresses would be like on stage was very influential on my opinion of the play. There were minor issues, but personally, the play was great in almost every aspect.